(b) whether the Government plan to take the help of international experts and private caterers; and

(c) if so the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Improvement in the catering and other on board train services has been taken up as a mission area and detailed specifications for menu, packaging, presentation and services have been standardised in the case of catering services in Rajdhani, Shatabdi and other long distance Mail/Express trains. Thalis have been phased out from the catering services in trains as they are not considered hygienic and instead food is being served in casserole packs where quality is maintained.

(b) and (c) Indian Railway Catering & Tourism Corporation has been set up which will take up the upgradation and standardisation of on board services in trains. Experts from the professional institutes are also being consulted for upgrading the services.

Introduction of Express Trains between Rourkela and Allahabad and Bilaspur and Patna

505. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a proposal to introduce an Express train between Rourkela and Allahabad and another between Bilaspur and Patna;

(b) whether the above proposal is going to be implemented during the current financial year; and

(c) if so, the steps taken in that direction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Train Accident

506. SHRI AMAR SINGH:
SHRI ANIL SHARMA:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the total number of serious train accidents which took place from 1st January, 1998 to 31st August, 1999.

(b) how many of them have been inquired into by the Commissioner of Railway Safety so far; and

(c) what are the reasons for not disposing of the remaining cases?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) 654 consequential train accidents took place between 1st January, 1998 to 31st August, 1999.

(b) Fifty six.

(c) All accidents are being inquired at different levels. Those serious accidents which involve loss of life, injuries and/or substantial property damage to Railway property are inquired into by Commissioner of Railway Safety. Remaining cases are inquired into by the Railway Officials at different levels.

Free Transit on Indian Railways

507. SHRI ANIL SHARAMA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the existing changes made in the categories of persons allowed free transit on Indian Railways;

(b) what categories are allowed 100% concession, 50% concession and less than that in procurement of tickets for their travel in India;

(c) whether Govt. are considering to grant more cconcession to senior citizens above the age of 75; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH) (a) No changes have been made in the existing categories of passes for free travel on Indian Railways.

(b) A statement is enclosed (*see* below)

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Due to financial constraints, it has not been possible to grant more concession to senior citizens above the age of 75 years.

Statement

(i) No category is allowed 100% concession in the fare. However, the following categories are issued Complimentary Card/Cheque passes for free travel on the Railways.

(1) Freedom Fighters. (Cost is borne by the Ministry of Home Affairs.)

(2) Arjuna Awardees/Olympic Medalists/ Asian & Commonwealth Gold Medalists/ Dronacharya Awardees.

(3) Winners of Chakra series Gallantry Awards (Defence).